

N.B. Four unsolicited tributes to C.B. — two before
09 March 1994, and two after....

MAD MONEY BLUES

"Hey, old timer. Who do you like in the fourth?" Ellis called over the sea of empty seats behind him to the curmudgeon who was sitting back there alone. He had seen the old boy pick up a bundle off an X-acta in the first race and another bundle off a twelve-to-one shot that came hard off the curve to win by a length in the third. The old timer ignored Ellis, kept his nose buried in his Racing Form. "My partner," Ellis continued, "is at the window right now puttin' thirty down on Lusty Lorraine to win." The Form dropped, revealing a pock-marked bulldog's face with a long red nose in its center. "Then your partner's a fucking idiot," the old timer called down. Lusty Lorraine was running at 99 to 1. "So what the hell are you gonna do, you old bastard? Bet the favorite? That's what my wife does, bets two dollars to win three." The old timer ignored him, and Ellis, under his breath, called the old boy an asshole as he turned around to watch the horses strut by. He noticed that his Lusty Lorraine had a spring to her step.

The favorite was a coal-black filly named Dangerous Donna. Her jockey, Mr. Pincay, fell off her when she bolted out of the gate. The old timer crumbled up his Racing Form and threw it to the ground and stomped it. When Lusty Lorraine edged through on the rail to win by a nose, the old boy stalked down and punched Ellis in the eye and Clete on the jaw, then stormed back up to his seat and tried to iron out the damage he had done to his Racing Form. "Cranky son-of-a-bitch," said Clete as he rubbed his jaw. Ellis blinked his reddened eye and shook his head and said, "Good thing the old fart's got little hands."

— Dan Lenihan

Oceanside CA

YOU PRICK

I'd never read a poem under my own steam until 1972, when I was 22.

Then, walking through Pickwick's one day looking for something on serial murder, I was distracted by something startling in a corner. It looked like what I was looking

for: BUKOWSKI. ERECTIONS, EJACULATIONS, EXHIBITIONS AND GENERAL TALES OF ORDINARY MADNESS. But it was the face that got me. I had to find out what this was.

From there I became hopelessly enmired. I didn't know if it was poetry but I knew it reached inside, jangled things. I bought everything I could find by the gargoyle of poetry. I still disliked poetry. But I liked the gargoyle. (Some cretin once was mouthing copious "poetic" references at me and when I told him I didn't know what the fuck he was talking about, he said, "You mean you haven't read So-and-so?" "No," I said, "I don't read much poetry." Stricken, he stammered, "But you write poetry." "That doesn't mean I have to like it.")

I lived in L.A. until 1981 and I would spot the gargoyle every now and then. Once at a film documentary on international gore. Once outside a record store. Twice I passed him on the freeway. It was good to see the book cover in motion.

I attended a couple readings. At the first one, in Huntington Beach, he had been droning on disinterestedly for about 20 minutes when he looked into the audience and said, "What's wrong with you people? You're all dead. Just sitting there, listening to this shit." After a moment of silence I addressed him from my seat: "You prick!" His face lit up and he said, "There's a man who appreciates my work."

I saw him another time reading at The Troubadour. It was a rotten place for it. After it was over and I was exiting the club, I noticed Bukowski sitting on a bench. As I approached him, he glared at me and said, "Get away from me." I had already called him a prick, so I figured we were even.

He got big. Europe. Movies. Videos. I'm still waiting for the TIME cover. When you say "Bukowski" now, most people not only know who you're talking about but have an opinion as well. "Oh yeah ... the Barfly." Sometimes they'll just smile, or laugh. Some people will snort. You often get vivid reactions from females.

Still, the gargoyle writes.
And I still read it all.
And I imagine, still, he is a prick.

— Scott Schafer

Port Angeles WA